

# REEL LIFE

## COVER STORY

# WIND AND DRANO SPRINGERS ARE COMING

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Chinook

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Jumbo Trout Lakes

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Hillary Holman with a nice Drano lake  
Springer. Photo credit Paul Hamilton.

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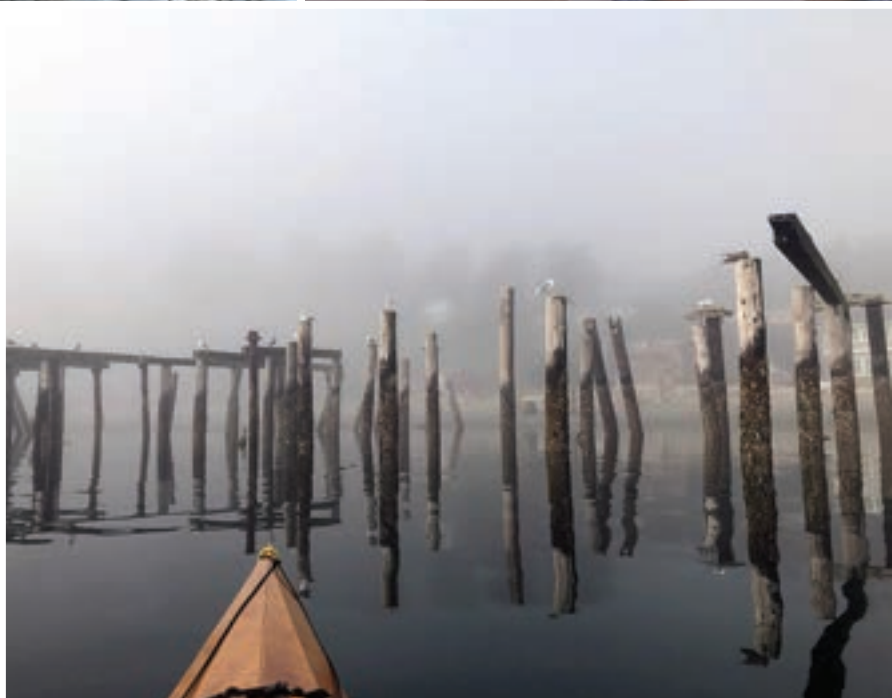
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# EDITOR'S CORNER:

Welcome Spring! (oops, that proclamation may be a tad early...). Even so, the days are getting longer and the constant cloudy days and rainy weather are finally being interrupted by some decent days. Sports Shows have been keeping us entertained, and scattered steelhead reports remind us that there is action to be had for anglers in these winter months. This month we look at opportunities available now, and opportunities yet to come. And yes, there are lots of angling adventures besides steelheading as our writers will share. Meanwhile, Northwest Fishing Reports will have a booth at the Big Horn Show at the Spokane Fair and Expo Center March 17-20th. There'll be lots of great vendors and guides to talk to and seminars to take in. We hope you'll swing by our booth and grab some free swag, as well as pick up some NWFR branded gear. Rumor has it they may even get me in front of the podium to give a talk or two... see you at the Show!

Mike Carey - [mike@northwestfishingreports.com](mailto:mike@northwestfishingreports.com) @mikecareynwfr



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# WALLEYE WILLIE SHOOTOUT MEMORIAL BENEFIT TOURNAMENT

All proceeds go to Celilo Cancer Center Fund to honor Willie and Sheila Ross.

## WHEN

**April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022**

(April 3<sup>rd</sup> alternate for weather)

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- 7am for sign in and boat operators meeting
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Hillary Holman

It's March, and the last of the outdoorsman shows to sprout up in the NW is the Bighorn Outdoor Adventure Show in Spokane, Washington at the Spokane County Fair & Expo Center. This could be the last chance for deals and new gear before the season begins and all are anticipating the Big Horn Show. What new gear, spices, jerky and sauces will you find? What new gear can give you the edge you need? And while your there, what's good to eat? The Big Horn Show turns the BIG 6-0 this year and there is plenty of reasoning why it's one of the largest and longest running shows of its kind in the NW. The Big Horn got its name in the early 1960's for its' mount competition that brings hunter's far and wide to showcase their trophies in The Trophy Territory competition. The Big Horn Show has

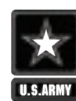
evolved from its days of Ole to what can best be described as a fantastic Sportsman's paradise. Trophy Territory is still a main attraction, but in its shadow has emerged a festival of fun for the whole family. From the Reptile Man to the Climbing wall, to a stocked fish pond for kids, to the live music in the Sportman's Lounge, there is plenty of fun to be had. Vendors from all over the NW zero in on their upcoming outdoor adventures. Masters in their fields find their way to the stages to host seminars on good practice, stewardship and application and techniques. Live music and cooking demonstrations hit the main stage with The Jessie Quandt Band Friday night and Fogline Saturday, with daily cooking demonstrations from Chef Adam Hegsted of Crave Tv and Richie Harrod of Harrod Outdoors. Book a guide with a local expert or buy a piece of

metal art. The Big Horn Show has it all. On with the food! Oh, the Nuts. The aroma fills the air and excite all who enter the Big Horn Show. Long Horn BBQ is always onsite and delivers a great BBQ Pork Sandwich. Harrods Outdoors and Northwest Spices offers NW Seasonings. Stock up on your Honey with Chase Honey. There is Fudge, Jerky, pepperoni, and Old Timer Pork Rinds. You name it, they got it. Whether you are watching a cooking demonstration on the main stage or testing out the samples from the bounty of viddle vendors, you will find what your pallet desires at the Big Horn Show. It's been a long 2 years of life without the Big Horn Show. The outfitters, vendors, and speakers have dusted off their acts and spent 2 years preparing for this moment. Are you as ready as they are?

*The Big Horn show is presented by the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council, a non-profit dedicated to conservation efforts in the Inland Northwest. They see approximately 26,000 attendees over 3 days. This show is their primary source for fundraising for the year. They meet the 1st Tuesday every month at 6116 N Market Spokane, WA. Join on [INWC.Org](http://INWC.Org) or stop by their office. Check out their schedule at Big Horn Show – Inland Northwest Wildlife Council ([INWC.org](http://INWC.org))*



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**March 2022 | 7**



Watch Now!

# Early Season Spring Chinook

*Photo credit Jason Brooks*

*Hot springer action is coming your way!*



Jason Brooks

Pulling into the parking lot at the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge the rain began to fall. It was early springtime with frequent storms filling rivers along with snow runoff making them muddy and hard to fish. But spring chinook, or “Springers” are prized for their oily flesh and regardless of the weather anglers head out in hopes of catching one. The first spring chinook is often landed in February but anglers start to get really excited for this fishery in March. The height of the runs are usually in late April and the fishery will continue into May. On good years some spring chinook

will be caught in June, just before the runs turn from springers to “June hogs” of summer chinook.

The plan was to head downstream on Lake River where it entered the Columbia. From there to cross the river towards St. Helen’s Oregon and fish the southern side of Sauvie Island in the Multnomah Channel. Though I had a Washington fishing license, this day of Spring Chinook would take me into Oregon only waters. The night before our trip Buzz Ramsey called me for the information needed to purchase a one day Oregon license. As I met him in the parking lot he handed me the license and made sure I didn’t forget good raingear. Early spring fishing means

bad weather and this day was no exception. In fact, it was forecast for major winds along with rain but no lightning. Buzz runs an open sled making it much easier to fight the strong and powerful springers but it also exposes you to the elements. The lack of a windshield and canvass top helps control the trolling too as the covers often act like sails and make it difficult to track in the wind. We were joined by Shirley and Mitch Sanchotena, good friends of Buzz.

Motoring down the stagnant tributary towards the Columbia the waters were calm giving a false sense of hope that the crossing would be easy. Looking at the tops of the trees that lined the



waterway though told of a different story. Swaying back and forth with a few branches breaking off we knew that the open river would be a wet ride across.

Rounding the point and heading south the river was a light brown from the spring runoff, which is why the fish often times head into the side channels, estuaries and sloughs where the water is slower and runs clearer. The water was high but the week prior it was near flood stage and unfishable, even in the big river. Keeping an eye out for sweeper trees and logs, Buzz kept the boat on plane as we bounced across the tops of the whitecap waves.

Finally making it to the Oregon side the small town of St. Helens came into view. St. Helens was a town whose history was built on shipping cargo up and down the mighty Columbia. Founded by European settlers in 1845 and incorporated in 1889 St. Helens was originally a Native American village where the Multnomah tribe had several longhouses. It later became a hub for shipping until the merchants at Portland began to protest and eventually the small town turned towards fishing and logging for its industry. Today, St. Helens is known for its charm and often provides a backdrop for movies and television shows along with coffee shops and the large sawmill on the shores



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near the beginning of the Multnomah channel

Turning the boat eastward into the 21-mile long channel that makes up the southern shores of Sauvie Island we were now in all Oregon waters. The fish at the lower part of the waterway are a mix of Washington and Oregon fish getting out of the main channel. Though this is an arm of the Willamette River that flows past the tall skyscrapers of Portland this part of the river is mixed with a shoreline of cow pastures, beaches, a levee, and various points that make for current breaks and backwaters. Some of the Willamette strain of Spring chinook enter here but it is also used as a calm

water thoroughfare for fish getting out of the high and muddy Columbia. As they near Portland the fish will turn back downriver of the main Willamette and re-join the Columbia, essentially just going around Sauvie Island on the southern edge.

It is the point breaks that we planned on using at first. With the wind kicking up and the currents pushing downriver in high water we set up on a point that the fish used as a current break. The idea is to anchor up and let the fish come to us during the incoming tide. This also works on the outgoing tide too as the river currents pick back up again and the fish use the breaks to move upriver.

After dropping anchor, we rigged the rods with a slider to a 16-ounce cannonball on a short dropper. The leader was between four and five feet with a few "golf tee's" and a chain swivel in the middle to keep weeds and line twist from affecting our lures. Starting the morning off with Mag-lip 4.0's in "Mad Clown" color, the big plugs wobbled well in the currents. With the water a bit off color we stuck with a silver or chrome base with either chartreuse, cerise, or a bright orange and yellow accent. One other technique that Buzz showed us to use in off-color water is to run a dropper set-up with



two Big Al's Fish Flash in tandem and then trail a cut plug herring. As the day waned on we also switched out the herring for Mulkey Guide Flash Spinners behind the double Fish Flash in-line flashers.

A few hours of "sitting on the hook" and some canned kokanee sandwiches provided by Shirley it was time to try something else. We kept watch on the trees above us, especially the ones on Sauvie Island that were near the main Columbia on the other side. It seemed the wind was getting worse. Rain showers were frequent but there were enough breaks from them to not worry about lightning. With no hits on anchor it was time to give trolling a try as the tide was slack and the fish could use the main channel of the river and slough.

Keeping two Mulkey spinners out and switching the plugs over to herring we began our troll downriver. The point we left was a few miles above

St. Helens and we noticed that there was a windbreak along the south shore. Though we preferred to hug Sauvie Island we made the move toward Oregon's mainland and trolled along a levee that kept a large cow pasture from becoming a pond. When we neared St. Helen's the Columbia came into view as we noticed white capped waves with the wind blowing off the tops. A Coast Guard rescue helicopter flew overhead for the second time that day and we began to wonder if they were trying to tell us something as we had only seen two other boats all day, both of which had already left.

Finally, the better part of valor caught up to us and we realized we should get off of the river. Crossing back over the Columbia was rough but since the tide was still slack it wasn't too bad, except for Buzz, who was standing at the transom and doing his best to watch for trees and logs in the river. Back at the boat launch the winds seemed calm and the boat

went back onto the trailer with ease.

There are other boat launches on the Oregon side but the public launch at Ridgefield is a large facility, located on Lake River that begins at Vancouver Lake a few miles away. The launch is in relatively calm waters. This makes for a great place to start your day of spring chinook fishing. Ample parking and a modest daily fee, along with it being about fifteen minutes from I-5 through the small town of Ridgefield.

If the main-stem Columbia is open for fishing then you don't need to cross over to Sauvie Island's south side, along with the river conditions being conducive as well, then you can find point breaks and shelves to fish. Much like in other parts of the Columbia, anchor fishing on the outgoing and the first part of the incoming tide makes for a relaxing day. This is big water so larger boats are a good idea, though on a calm day a smaller craft can launch out of Ridgefield and do well staying close to the Washington side. Trolling here is mostly done when you find a flat with a shelf that breaks off into the main-stem of the Columbia. Work the edge of the shelf with a dropper weight.

The mouth of the Lewis river is just around the corner from the inlet of Lake River. When the Lewis is open then starting



out from the Ridgefield launch is an option. Just head downriver close to the Washington side and keep an eye out for the deadline markers that show the boundary to the Lewis. Trolling plugs here is a mainstay. Wiggle Warts in orange or chartreuse is popular, along with Superbaits, Mag-Lips, and Flatfish.

But the Multnomah Channel gets most of the attention. This is because on good years the runs are strong enough to allow for a longer season than what is allowed on the main Columbia. The calm waters and point breaks makes for a relaxing day on the water. Other fish frequent here as well including sturgeon. We noticed thrashing and splashing upriver from us so we motored up to see what was going on. A Sea Lion found an oversized sturgeon and the epic battle ensued. The large predator would come up and out of the water pulling the sturgeon with him but the weight of the large fish was too much and back down they would go. Each



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time they surfaced the Sea Lion had taken another large chunk out of the fish. It was a battle that I had never seen before and reminded me that nature is not nice. The fish, probably over fifty years old was losing the fight and it was more fish than the Sea lion could devour in one meal

but nothing goes to waste in the wild as seagulls and cormorants dive bombed around the sturgeon picking up pieces of flesh ripped apart by the Sea Lion.

Returning the next day and making it across the Columbia the morning started off with sitting on anchor. It didn't take long for the first rod to bend over with a bite. Shirley fought the chinook to the net and a fifteen-pound hatchery Springer came aboard. Anglers who target Spring chinook know that any fish is a good fish and multiple hook-ups are hopeful but don't always occur. As the run peaks the boat traffic can be busy, especially at the ramp.



*They can be few and far between, but Springers are well worth the wait!*

# WIND AND DRANO SPRINGERS ARE COMING

*Drano Lake Springer  
Salmon Tips and Techniques*



Watch Now!



Rob Phillips

Rob Phillips is an award-winning author from Yakima. His outdoor column "Northwest Sportsman" has appeared in the Yakima Herald-Republic since 1991. Rob is also the author of the best-selling mystery novel "The Cascade Killer."

One of the most popular fishing seasons of the year for many Northwest anglers is just about here and we all have our fingers crossed that there will be enough fish to have some success when the season opens for spring chinook.

Early forecasts are for slightly improved return numbers the upper Columbia River and two

popular spring salmon holes. Unfortunately, those numbers for the Wind River and Drano Lake are still well below the 10-year average for both of those popular fishing holes.

Traditionally, both the Wind and Drano open on March 15, but over the past 15 years, the runs have been returning later and later. That means come the opener, there

will most likely be very few spring salmon around to make it worthwhile to even try fishing for them. Experienced spring salmon anglers keep an eye on the run counts at Bonneville Dam, and once there are at least a few hundred fish climbing the fish ladders every day, that is when they get serious about getting out there after them. In recent years the best fishing has been the last



week of April, and on into mid-May.

The salmon run prognosticators put out their early forecasts in December, and then updated them in February. There have been about a million words written about how the biologists in Washington and Oregon go about determining these forecasts, so there is no reason to get into that here. Just know the crystal ball they are all peering into can be clouded by all kinds of factors. Still, they do their best, and if nothing else, the early predictions give all of us salmon lovers something to start thinking before the first of the spring salmon start their spawning run up the mighty Columbia and its tributaries.

As most avid spring chinook salmon anglers know, the runs have been up and down considerably over the past few decades. In recent years the run numbers have not been great, and in the past couple years, sportfishing seasons have been cut short, and catch limits reduced, when the numbers of salmon have not returned as anticipated. This year forecasters are calling for a total spring salmon run on the Columbia and its tributaries of 197,000 fish. That compares to an actual run in 2021 of 152,675. That 197,000 number includes fish headed up the Columbia and turning left or right into the Willamette,

Cowlitz, Wind, Drano, Klickitat, Snake, Yakima and other tributaries. A good chunk of the run, over 50,000 fish, is predicted to return to the Willamette.

For the Wind River, located just a few miles upstream of Bonneville Dam, the early forecast for springers is definitely down from the really good runs not that many years ago. But the numbers are looking to be up from 2021. Some 4,200-spring chinook are predicted to be returning to the Wind River this year. That is considerably better than the 1,200 that were forecast to return last year. The actual return to the Wind in 2021 was 3,227.

Over the years, the fishing area at the mouth of the

Wind River has expanded out into the Columbia River considerably, and it can accommodate a fair number of boats. First-time anglers should be aware of a few things before fishing the Wind. First, the boat launch is old, and there is very limited parking. Secondly, motoring out from the launch to get under the bridge to the fishing hole is a bit tricky. Good advice for newbies is to follow someone who knows where they are going. Finally, the Wind River got its name honestly as the wind can flat blow there. So, pay attention to the weather forecasts and be ready to abort if it gets too bad.

Luckily, even if the wind is



*The author with a beautiful springer*

howling at the Wind River, it is normally not as bad at Drano Lake, at the mouth of the Little White Salmon River, ten miles or so upriver from the Wind. This year's spring salmon forecast for Drano is 3,800 fish. Last year 3,299 spring salmon returned to the picturesque lake that sits next to Highway 14.

For both the Wind and Drano those early forecasts should be enough to set some sportfishing seasons, but with numbers similar to last year, it would be a good guess that bag limits would be similar to the past couple years. Last year anglers were allowed to keep only one adipose fin-clipped adult fish a day. While Drano has a newer boat launch, with a decent number of parking spots on the pad to accommodate tow rigs with boat trailers, during the height of the springer season, the parking lot fills quickly and many rigs end up parking along the highway. Pay attention to the signs near the entrance of the launch, as there is no parking along a stretch of the highway right at the entrance to the launch, and the State Patrol will tow rigs parked illegally.

At both the Wind River and Drano, a Skamania County launch pass is required. Those can be purchased at the mini-marts in Stevenson and Bingen.

Over the years a variety of different fishing methods



have been used to catch the often-times finicky spring salmon. For years everyone trolled a plug. An orange or pink Magnum Wiggle Warts was what everyone used. And, plugs will still work today. Some die-hards will stick to the big Wiggle Warts, but newer plugs such as the Mag Lip have gained favor with anglers, as the skip-beat, searching action seems to entice strikes better than a straight running plug. The three-inch and three and a half-inch version in orange or metallic silver with chartreuse combinations are favored. Prawn spinner rigs will also work well at both the Wind and Drano. Using a Cascade style blade in red and white, or chartreuse and silver above five or six beads and a double hook set-up is the basic rigging. Rig the prawn, dyed red or orange, so that it is swimming backwards through the water. Some guides and anglers prefer to have a slow roll on their prawns,

while others want them to have no roll at all. There are times too, when a plug-cut herring will work, so most anglers have some in the cooler just in case a herring bite gets going. Usually, herring will work best early in the season. If you are trolling a prawn spinner or a herring at Drano, using an 10 to 12-ounce dropper will help get the bait down fairly quickly. Many anglers will get into the cluster of boat near bridge in a spot affectionately known as the "toilet bowl." Lots of salmon are caught there as they enter Drano from the Columbia, but because it is literally bumper-to-bumper trolling, a heavier weight of 12 to 16 ounces is needed to get the spinner and/or bait straight down and out of the way of the nearby lines of the boat behind. At the Wind, because the water is shallower, a dropper weight of 4- to 8-ounces is all that is necessary. Drop the rig down and let the dropper bump bottom and then reel it up two or three cranks. That should put you in the zone. Trollers using bait will run their rigs about four feet behind an in-line flasher like a Fish Flash or a 360-style flasher like a Pro-Troll. Others will run the bait with no attractors at all. Finally, a bit later in the run season, anglers will do well using bait below a bobber. Most will anchor up or will use an electric motor to keep them in place in the river current and wind, and will drop some cured salmon eggs, sandshrimp



or dyed prawns down. Again, later in the season this technique can be very effective at both the Wind and at Drano.

In the past few years Washington regulations have allowed anglers fishing at the Wind and Drano to fish with two rods if they have a two-pole endorsement on their license. The two-rod regulation normally runs from May 1 through June 30. The rules in the past have also allowed boat limits (everyone can keep fishing until the limit for the boat is caught) during the same time frame. Be sure to check current regulations. Spring salmon season is almost here. Run numbers are predicted to be up a bit, so there is at least a decent chance of catching one or two spring chinook this year. Fishing hard and putting your time in, increases your odds even more. And, when you do hook up with one of these incredibly hard fighters, you'll be glad you made the effort.

Oh, and when you taste just how incredibly good these fish are, well, you'll want to get back to Drano or the Wind just as soon as you possibly can.



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A large background image showing a dog, likely a Springer Spaniel, looking out from the side of a boat. The sun is setting over a body of water, creating a bright reflection. The dog is wearing a red life vest.

# FISHING WITH YOUR 4-LEGGED FRIEND



by Mike Carey

Duke tentatively jumped up on the bow of my Thunderbird, looking intently at the water passing by as we trolled along. “Oh boy, I said to my wife JoAnn, “he looks like he is thinking about going for a swim.” Muscles tensing, Duke fulfilled my prediction and splashed into the cool spring waters of Lake Washington. As the boat traveled forward, I went to the side, leaned over, and grabbed the handle on the back of his life jacket, pulling him safely back into our boat. He gave me a look as if to say, “what did you do that for, I was just starting to have some fun!” Such is the life of going fishing with a dog. JoAnn had always

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wanted me to have a dog that I could take fishing, and Duke, our one-year-old Springer Spaniel, was just that dog. Trained for upland bird hunting, I’d introduced him to water early and he took to it. That said, hunting with a dog on dry ground versus having a dog on a moving boat are two very different things. While fishing with your four-legged best friend can be a wonderful experience, it does present some unique challenges that anglers should be aware of. When you decide to bring your dog along with you on your boat for the first time, it’s important to think through what is entailed (pun intended) for your fishing trip. First and foremost is – know your dog! What kind of training

has he had? Has he been introduced to water? Can he swim? Does he obey your commands? These are all important questions to consider before you bring your dog along for a day of fishing. Having your best friend along for a day of fishing can make the day that much special, or, it can be a huge headache, and possibly put your dog in danger. Let’s look at some basics to think about before you take your dog out on your boat. First and foremost is obvious – know your dog! Is he trained? Has he had experience with water before? Does he listen to commands? Will he be a good partner at the boat launch, or a distraction and irritation to those around you? Knowing your dog



will guide you on how you approach your day on the water. You've arrived at the boat launch and there's a couple of boats in line waiting to launch. It's just you and your best friend and your expensive boat waiting to launch. Now what do you do? In my opinion, Fido needs to stay safe and secure in your rig. Letting your dog out to run around is a big no-no. Other anglers looking to launch are not going to be happy with a dog running around, no matter how well-behaved you may think he is. Dogs can be unpredictable, so keep him in the truck as you go through your routine prep for launching your boat. Or, if there is place you can leash him up to stay and watch, out of the way of others, that would be OK. For me, I keep Duke in the truck where

there are others around. If it's just the two of us, I'm ok with letting him out. That's because I know him and he is well-trained to commands and, most importantly, he obeys. Launch completed and boat secured, your truck is parked. It's time to go fishing with your buddy! The next critical question to ask is this – life jacket or no life jacket? For Duke, I treat him like a kid. Just because he can swim doesn't mean he's safe to be in a boat without a life jacket. Especially when we are about to put the peddle to the meddle and blast off at thirty miles an hour to our favorite fishing location. So, the life jacket goes before we get up on a plane. It's one less thing for me as a boat operator to worry about. If Duke goes in, I know that he will be safe if something happens and he goes in.

What about fishing all day, either anchored up or slow trolling? Our Lake Washington trip was the first time I took Duke on the water, and he decided he wanted to see what the water was like. Since then, he has never jumped into the lake on his own. I find that very interesting, and I now am OK with taking the jacket off if we are anchored or trolling. Of course, weather and conditions are also a consideration in this equation. I try to never take Duke on the boat if it's not going to be a pleasant day. A puking dog is no fun and it's not fair to the dog to be put through rough water conditions. While your out on the boat there's a couple doggy essentials to keep in mind. Dogs need a few things to be comfortable: shade on a sunny day, water, a comfy place to lay down,

*"The vast majority of SPD cases are from Salmonid type fish. This is a large category including Trout, Steelhead, Coho, Chinook, King, Chum, Sockeye and others. There are some reports of non-salmonid fish and salamanders playing a role in this predominantly canine disease. This condition is very complicated and includes the fish (salmonid), a liver fluke (Nanophyetus salmincola), snail (Oxytrema plucifer), and rickettesia bacteria (Neorickettsia helminthoeca). This disease only occurs in the Pacific Northwest and is thought to only occur here due to the habitat range of the snail. The pathway for infection is thought to begin with eating a snail that is infected with a juvenile lifecycle of the liver fluke, which contains the rickettesia bacteria. Any tissue of the fish can be infected, which means the flesh, blood, guts, eyeballs, or slime. Other types of fish can be a factor in this disease, but the tissue that may be infected in other fish may not be what dogs tend to eat (e.g.: only fins), which is why "other fish" are often thought unimportant. Juvenile salmonid fish become infected by eating free-floating liver flukes or snail parts on their way to sea where they reach maturity, therefore the oceanic life cycle phase of the Salmonid fish is thought to be as contagious to domestic dogs as river salmon. This disease is further complicated by the fact that the disease-causing rickettesia comes in several varieties, which allows for dogs to get Salmon Poison Disease more than one time." AstoriaVeterinarian.com*



***James' catch is being eyed by two hungry dogs***

and maybe a treat or two (especially when you try to eat your own lunch!). They also need potty breaks. Finding a place to pull your boat up on shore gives you a chance to stretch your legs and let doggy stretch his. Not to mention relieve himself. Of course, being a dog means some sniffing time is important. Just like fishing with kids, I think it's important to not be hard-core when fishing with a dog. Give your Best Friend some "dog time". I think it will make him more excited the next time you pull out your boat – ya! Another fishing adventure! A couple words of caution

when fishing with a dog. Expect the unexpected. I remember a trip on the Snake River doing a Cast and Blast Adventure. We had dogs on the boat for our chukar hunt, but first we were fishing for chinook salmon, side drifting eggs. I think you know where I'm going with this... at the end of a drift we brought in our gear to run back to the top of the hole. One of the anglers dogs decided that he might like the taste of fresh salmon eggs for breakfast. Before we knew it, this angler's dog had scarfed down a baited hock of salmon eggs, all the way beyond reach. Unfortunately for the angler

his day of fishing was cut short as we took him back to the boat launch for a trip to the vet for x-rays. The vet informed the owner of the dog to watch to see if the hook passed (not the most pleasant job by the way). While no harm came to the dog, it was an expensive reminder of what I mentioned early – dogs can be unpredictable. Another thing that anglers in the Pacific Northwest should be aware of is Salmon Poisoning. This also includes trout, by the way. While cooked fish is a good protein to feed your dog, raw salmon and trout, including the slim on the skin, can be poisonous. By all means, take your dog fishing – you'll love it and so will the dog – but be ever mindful and keep a close eye on your Four Legged-Friend!



***What's better than one friend? Two!***





by John Kruse

A new organization dedicated to getting veterans, active-duty service members and first responders outdoors to go fishing is growing fast in Central Washington. The organization, which will soon be a non-profit, is Operation Catching Freedom. I got a chance this week to talk to the founder, Tony Warren, to find out more.

Tony told me he's a combat veteran who served in the United States Marine Corps and has always found that spending time outdoors, "Is a great way to clear my head." In 2018 he came up with the idea of taking veterans out for a day of bass fishing and approached the Central Washington Bass Club and MarDon Resort on Potholes Reservoir. That first event took place in the spring of 2019, was a success, and Operation Catching Freedom was born.

Last year another Operation Bass event was held at Potholes Reservoir the second Saturday of May and 20 veterans were paired with 20 bass boat owners for a day on the water, followed by a BBQ at MarDon Resort and a goodie bag full of fishing tackle for each angler to take home.

2021 also saw Operation Salmon take place on the

# OPERATION: CATCHING FREEDOM

*Volunteer Kaylee Baker and Navy Veteran Brandy Wyffels  
Courtesy Operation Catching Freedom*

## This year's event dates and locations are:

### OPERATION BASS

- May 7th
- 20 anglers
- MarDon Resort

### OPERATION SALMON

- July 9th
- 30 anglers
- Chelan Falls PUD Park

### OPERATION WALLEYE

- September 24th
- 30 anglers
- Coulee Playland Resort

Columbia River near Chelan Falls. Twentysix veterans hopped on boats for a morning of salmon fishing and enjoyed a nice meal at Chelan Falls PUD Park to wrap up the event.

Several Central Washington fishing guides have donated their boats, time and talent to help out.

This includes Austin Moser (Austin's Northwest Adventures LLC), Brad Wagner (Bobber Down Guide Service), Kurt Middleton (Middy's Guide Service), Levi Rodelo (Ross Outdoor Adventures) and Caine Brand (Heavy Hitter Guide Service). These guides have unselfishly helped out during events and/or by taking anglers on special fishing trips they win through free raffles put on by the group.

include Operation Walleye. This event will occur the last Saturday in September and Ground Zero will be the Coulee Playland Resort at Banks Lake. However, anglers are not limited to just fishing for walleye in Banks Lake. They can also target

**20 | NWFRTV.com**

walleye at nearby Rufus Woods Reservoir or Lake Roosevelt.

In addition to this, first responders (law enforcement, fire and emergency medical service members) are now invited to come on board for a day of fishing. It does not cost anything to participate in these events and fishing gear as well as bait is provided.

Veterans and first responders who live in Central or Eastern Washington can sign up for each event at [www.operationcatching-freedom.org](http://www.operationcatching-freedom.org) two months prior to each event. There will be a drawing to determine which anglers get to fish and the lucky winners will be notified two weeks prior to the event. While the event itself is free, transportation to and lodging at the event site is the responsibility of each participant.

If you are interested in

helping out this fledgling organization Warren has two requests. First, he needs some experienced walleye and salmon anglers with boats who are familiar with the waters that will be fished during each event. Second, Warren is looking for tackle, whether it be from companies or enthusiasts making them out of their shop. Warren plans on giving the fishing tackle to the veterans and first responders as part of a gift bag during each event.

If you don't fall into either of these volunteer categories you can also donate or help sponsor an event. You'll find a link at the Operation Catching Freedom website to do so. You can also contact Tony Warren through the Operation Catching Freedom Facebook Page and chat with him there.

John Kruse – [www.northwesternoutdoors.com](http://www.northwesternoutdoors.com) and [www.americaoutdoorsradio.com](http://www.americaoutdoorsradio.com)



*Army Veteran Josh Scott had a great time at last year's Operation Salmon event – Courtesy Operation Catching Freedom*





Watch Now!

Rogue River  
Steelhead Fishing



by Gary Lewis

**Gary Lewis is an award-winning author, TV host, speaker and photographer. Recent books include *Fishing Central Oregon, 6th Edition*, *Fishing Mount Hood Country* and *Bob Nosler Born Ballistic*. Gary has hunted and fished in eight countries on three continents and in the islands of the South Pacific. Born and raised in the Northwest, he has been walking forest trails and running rivers for as long as he can remember. Lewis is twice past president of the Northwest Outdoor Writers Association and a recipient of NOWA's Enos Bradner Award.**

"Black on the bottom, white in the middle and black on top. Skunk hair."

The fly Jim Dexter set before me was constructed with oval silver tinsel, although the tinsel was buried in the black chenille of the body. It bore a black skunk hair wing, topped with polar bear. I recognized the fly Jim Dexter showed me. It was a Skunk, the first fly I fished for steelhead when I was a kid stalking riffles on the Kalama River with my uncle. But this was no calf tail-pretender, but

a faithful-to-the-original version of the classic. Jim Dexter hails from northern California; born a fisherman and a tyer of flies, he moved to Bend, Oregon, as a teenager and makes his home now in LaPine, Oregon, where it is not far to fish his favorite waters - the Deschutes and Lava Lake. "Polar bear has a sheen in the water. There is nothing else like it," Dexter said. Dexter proffered another fly, this one an updated version of the Green Butt Skunk. It sported a chartreuse tag

# Ye Auld Stink Weasel

*The origin story of a favorite steelhead fly revisited.*

with red hackle fibers, a shorter body and a wing tied of polar bear with pearl Krystal Flash. In the book *Fish Flies: The Encyclopedia of the Fly Tier's Art*, author Terry Hellekson gives the tying recipe for the original Skunk. It's tail is crimson red hackle barbs. The body is black chenille ribbed with oval silver tinsel. The hackle is black, tied on as a collar, laying back and down. The wing is black skunk hair with an overwing of white skunk hair. Hellekson discusses the origin of the fly, credited by some to Wes Drain, of Seattle, who tied a similar fly for the Stillaguamish River in the 1930s. Another claim, Hellekson reported, tied it to the North Umpqua. Hellekson was probably referring to the Mildred Krogel story. Mildred Krogel was a fly tyer from Roseburg. And a lot of the early Skunks came from her desk. "My father," Hellekson

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wrote, “obtained a sample of the fly from Jim Pray in 1934. I have concluded that it is most likely not an Oregon fly.” Jim Dexter would agree with that statement. He told me the rest of the story. “Dad had the Redwood café down in Fortuna. He was the chef,” Dex said. Before that, the elder Dexter owned the café at the bus depot in Eureka. “His name was Rollin Benjamin Dexter, but his friends called him Rosie.” Dexter figures his dad was born about 1908, which would have put him in his mid-30s when little Jim was born. “He told me about tying the Skunk ever since I was in diapers. He tied it for the Eel River; for steelhead,” Dex said. “He had another fly he tied for silvers, it was called the Black and White Plastic.” Dex held one up. “No one

has ever seen this,” he said. The Black and White Plastic was tied small, on a Mustad offset hook, long before the style of salmon and steelhead hooks in favor today. The Skunk, also was tied small in those days. “The Skunk always had a red tail. Just hackle fiber. It had a black chenille body. It had a silver oval tinsel rib – large – you can’t buy it today. I can’t find the big stuff. It had black hackle up front and skunk for a wing. Black on the bottom, white in the middle and black on top. That’s where it got its name.” Among Rosie’s best friends was Jim Pray, the owner of a small fly shop in Eureka, 22 miles north of Fortuna. Pray sent a copy of Rosie’s Skunk off to Zane Grey and the steelhead fly tied with the hair of a common stink weasel began to gain admirers in the Northwest.

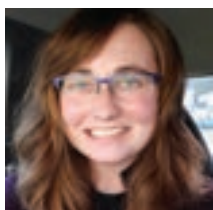
It has long been a favorite steelhead pattern, although its offspring, the Green Butt Skunk might be more effective. An angler named Dan Callaghan added the green butt to the original Skunk in the early 1950s. Tied in many variations, both the Skunk and its kittens are topped with calf tail - sometimes black and white and most often in white. But to get it right, a person wants to tie with skunk hair. Polar bear hair is just flat hard to get these days. But if you follow a skunk around long enough, you can get them to stand still. Clip a little of that wing material off and pat ‘em on the bum. Dexter likes the chartreuse tag on the rear of the Skunk too, but when he talked about it, he shivered. “If dad saw me putting a green butt on that thing, he’d kick my ass.”





Watch Now!

# 5 Westside Jumbo Trout Lakes



by Hannah Pennebaker

There's just something about trout fishing that just keeps me coming back. Trout aren't the biggest fish in our waters, but anglers can always count on them to provide a good day of fun for kids and beginners alike. Western Washington has many well-known trout producing lakes. Cranberry Lake, American Lake,

Lake Washington, Mineral Lake, and Riffe Lake all top my list for a chance at catching jumbo trout. Better yet, each of these lakes has great access for shore bound anglers.

Whether you want to catch the elusive brown trout, the coveted cutthroat trout, or the beautiful rainbow trout, each of these west side lakes has something different to offer.

## Cranberry Lake

Let's start off our list by talking about this little gem of a lake located in Deception Pass State Park. WDFW stocked this lake with thousands of 3+ pound jumbo rainbow trout in the fall, and there are still many just waiting to be caught. This lake receives less pressure than others in the area because gas motors are prohibited. Don't count on less noise though, there is an airfield nearby with frequent



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airplanes passing by just overhead! Although it's tucked out of the way, both the fishing and the views at Cranberry Lake are well worth the detour. Puget Sound is a stone's throw from the west side of the lake, so you can also cast for salmon during the right time of year. There is a rudimentary boat ramp with limited parking nearby. This is a peaceful little lake that's perfect for taking your kayak or small boat on. Still fishing on the south end of the lake can be productive from the fishing dock as well.

### **American Lake**

This lake is the largest natural lake in Pierce County, and is an old stand by for many fishermen in the region. It is regularly planted with upwards of 10,000 rainbow trout every year, and is open year round. For those without a boat, there is a pay to fish dock with bait and snacks. There are also several well maintained boat ramps around the lake. In the heat of the summer, the ramps can get quite busy with pleasure boater traffic, but there is plenty of room to spread out on the water. If the trout aren't biting, there is a great kokanee fishery here, also supplemented by WDFW plants. The rainbows grow to a healthy size in this beautiful, clear lake. Good places to start trolling are around VFW hospital and the large island in the center of the lake.

### **Lake Washington**

While this massive, urban lake is known for its smallmouth bass and crappie fishing, the trout scene here is truly a local treasure. Not only does this lake have rainbow trout, it also boasts delicious, red meat cutthroat trout. Boat access is easy- this large lake is dotted with boat ramps all around. Fishing can seem a tad daunting simply because of the sheer size of Lake Washington. It's well worth taking the time to learn the lake, piece by piece. There are great rewards for those willing to put in their time. The northern lake fishes much differently from the southern half of the lake. In the southern half, try trolling from the island to Boeing Field. If you launch up north, troll near the points of the lake. A good fish finder is a huge help! Cutthroat trout are predatory fish, and you'll often find them feeding on large schools of bait fish around the lake. These fish resemble rainbows, but are more heavily spotted and have signature red slashes underneath their heads. They can reach enormous sizes on this huge, rich lake. As for rainbows, they typically school in the top 50 feet of the lake, near the shallows. One caveat though; any rainbow trout over 18 inches in Lake Washington is legally considered a steelhead and must be released. For shore bound anglers, there are numerous public fishing piers around the lake that

provide great opportunities to catch your limit. All in all, Lake Washington is a top producer of big cutthroats and rainbows, and well worth the exploration.

### **Mineral Lake**

No list of jumbo trout producing lakes would be complete without Mineral Lake! Unlike the others on this list, this lake is not open year round. While this does limit fishing opportunities, the tradeoff is a shot at putting a 10+ brown or rainbow on the dinner table. Not many Westside lakes are reliable brown trout producers, but this lake puts out thousands every year. If you'd like to target browns, I'd recommend trolling crank baits or small spinners in the shallows. A word of caution about the lake though; keep a sharp eye out for logs and stumps in the water. This isn't the lake for breaking in your new main motor or doing water sports. Expect some company during opening day though, this lake only has one boat launch, and it's well known as one of the best trout lakes in the area. There is a pay to fish dock on the lake which also offers boat rentals. There is a stunning view of Mt. Rainier on clear days, and the lake is usually quite peaceful.

### **Riffe Lake**

You might be surprised to find Riffe Lake on a list of trout lakes. This large reservoir is known for its population of landlocked coho salmon. Rainbows





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and browns were simply an incidental catch, and not the main draw of the Lake. However, in 2020, things changed when Tacoma Power took possession of hundreds of thousands of triploid rainbow trout fry from a local hatchery. The trout have grown up, and the fishery has really taken off. This can easily provide a day of fun for the entire family. The triploids tend to hang out shallower in the water column than the coho, so downriggers are not necessary. Kayaks and small boats can easily catch their limits. In my experience, these fish are voracious eaters and will take just about any offering. Like Lake Washington, don't let the size of this lake intimidate you. Explore various depths and landmarks in the lake until you find the fish- it

won't take long! One word of warning is that the lake's water levels fluctuate throughout the year. Some boat ramps are unusable if the water level drops too low. The launch at Mossyrock Park is usable year round, but launching can be tricky if the the water is too low to float the dock. The surrounding clay banks are slippery and muddy to launch a boat from, but it's doable. You can check Tacoma Power's website for updates on the water level. If you'd rather not chance it, there is a fishing bridge at Taidnapam Park that's popular with local anglers. There is also some shore access at Mossyrock Dam. Riffe Lake usually treats anglers with quick limits of trout and/or coho, so it's always on my list to take new fishermen and kids.

Cranberry Lake, American Lake, Lake Washington, Mineral Lake, and Riffe Lake all offer amazing trout fishing opportunities for those with and without boats. These lakes all follow statewide trout fishing regulations: 5 fish limit, and every fish caught with bait counts as part of your limit, even if released. Cutthroats, browns, and rainbows are all delicious on the smoker or grill. All of these lakes are worth exploring and getting to know. You just might be rewarded with a trophy trout! Go out and try them today, and I hope to see you and your family out there!

# Fried Calamari

by Paul Lewis

Seattle is a place of many foods, cultures, and seemingly endless bounty from our great lands and waters. One of the best ways to spend some time on a winter day is out on the Puget Sound, Drinking a hot beverage, and jig for some squid! I had the opportunity to do some squidding the other day, which meant it was time to fire up the grease and make some fresh calamari.

Calamari has taken on many cultures and tastes over the years, but to find its origin, we look to Europe, specifically to the Mediterranean and Italy. Calamari is the Italian word for squid, and has been served along the coast of Italy and the surrounding countries of the Mediterranean and southern Europe for centuries. It is served many ways, can be grilled or fried, or even on a Kebab (the common serving in Portugal). In America we usually think of calamari as fried rings and tentacles served with lemon, parsley, and maybe some cocktail sauce or tasty garlic mayonnaise. It gained popularity in the U.S. in the mid 1970's thru the 80's on the eastern seaboard as a replacement for declining fish stocks such as cod.



From there, it took off and became a staple on the bar scene and in fancy eateries alike. Now that we know the origins, let's make some squid!

## INGREDIENTS:      OPTIONAL:

- Squid
- Eggs
- Milk
- Frying Oil
- Flour
- Onion Powder
- Garlic Powder
- Salt
- Pepper
- Cocktail sauce (relish, ketchup, lemon, horseradish, Worcestershire)
- Tartar sauce (mayo, relish lemon, mustard)
- Lemon wedges
- Parsley

## STEP ONE: CLEAN THE SQUID

To clean a squid, grasp the top (Mantle) and the head, then gently pull, separating the two. This will take the innards out and create two parts, the mantle, and the tentacles. Next, take a knife and cut right below the eyeballs, leaving the tentacles. Now that you have the tentacles, squeeze gently on the bottom, popping out the beak of the squid. Set aside tentacles in a bowl as they are ready to eat. With the mantle, cut off the fins then lightly remove the membrane by starting on a loose side near the cut or using the back of a knife to gently scrape away a place, then grab and pull off (this can be a little frustrating). Next, pull out the quill, a piece of structural cartilage running the length of the mantle. Once membrane is removed and the quill is removed, cut into rings of desired size by cutting across the mantle. Repeat with all squid then give a good rinse to ensure all innards are out.

## STEP TWO: PREPARE EGG WASH & FLOUR MIXTURE

Add eggs with a splash of milk to a bowl then beat until fully combined. In a separate dish, combine flour onion and garlic powders, salt, and pepper. All-purpose flour works great, but for an extra crisp crunch, I use "Wondra flour", which is an in-



*The finished dish is well worth the work!*



stant flour. It dissolves fast and also gives a great crunch. Seasonings go in the mixture dictated by your taste. For a ½ cup of flour, I use about a tablespoon of salt, a teaspoon or a teaspoon and a half of both onion and garlic powders, then just a couple pinches of flour. I love to taste my squid, so I season lightly. Make sure to experiment and do what works for you!

### STEP THREE: OIL

In a large pot, add enough oil to have about 2 inches off the bottom of the pan and turn the heat on high. For frying I use Vegetable, peanut, or canola oil. It is a great idea to put a thermometer in the oil, as we are looking to be around 350 degrees for optimum frying. If there is no oil, a good way to test is to drop a pinch flour in. If the flour sits, it's too cold. If it sizzles, you're ready! Once oil is hot, manage stove to retain temperature.

### STEP FOUR: FRY SQUID

Drop a handful of rings and tentacles into the egg wash to coat. This helps the flour stick. Once out of the wash, toss quickly in the flour mixture then drop in the fryer. Squid fries fast, so watch for it to become golden brown (2-4 minutes), then pull out and set on a rack. I prefer just a light coating, but if you love a heavy crunch, put your squid in a double-batter by going egg-flour-egg-flour. This will make a great full coating. As soon as you pull it out while the squid is still piping hot, hit it with some salt on the top. It is paramount to salt fast so the salt will stick to the coating and not just fall off. Squid tentacles pop voraciously in the oil, so it is a good idea to wear long sleeves and remove anything that can be damaged by oil in the area. It will spray far! Repeat with all squid until ready.

### STEP FIVE: PLATE AND SERVE!

Once all your squid is fried, plate gorgeously and place a bit of parsley on top for color. I love to add a little cocktail sauce and tartar sauce on the side as well. They are both super easy to make (See ingredients above), but there are certainly some delicious store-bought options as well!

Calamari is a messy, yet easy and delicious table-fare that is sure to impress your family and friends. It looks and tastes gourmet and will leave you wanting more for sure!



*An egg wash is essential to help the flour stick*





# WINTER SALT

by Randy Castello

Last month we touched of winter boat and gear maintenance. I know that a good number of our readers said “winter maintenance, heck I fish year-round”. First you should still establish an annual care and feeding routine for you friendly hole in the water. Second and the subject of this issue; if you do run your boat year-round, we are going to explore some local westside winter fishing opportunities. Specifically, the close to the ramp opportunities (they are numerous) in Washington Marine Area 7 or any other near shore fishery.

Before I dig into the details that pave the way for your next fish fry, I want to say a few words about winter boating safety. Our winter marine weather can be unpredictable at best. Occasionally we see a windless day but the prudent skipper should look at the NOAA Marine forecast and at least one of the many Apps that forecast wind and sea state for your area. Know the limits of your boat and crew; there is no point fishing if everybody is miserable and safe return to port is questionable so always error on the safe side.

Although not fishing, independent from the weather I’m on the water almost every day. Most winter days are not fishing weather. Be patient, if you watch the forecast and your schedule is a bit flexible there are days you will be able to get out.

We did a photo op trip for this article and although chilly the conditions were spectacular. 2 days earlier the wind was blowing 35 and gusting to over 50 MPH. The seas were outright dangerous and not the place for a fishing boat. Weather wise; winter small boat fishing in Marine area 7 or anywhere on Puget sound can be a crapshoot. Again, make know your limitations as a skipper that your boat is in tip-top condition.

Did I mention fish fry? Yup but what kind of



*Starry Flounder, bottoms up.*



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fish are going to take a dip in your frier? There are a number of species you can fish for year-round in Puget Sound. Per the WDFW Sport Fishing Rules bottom fish can be harvested year-round. The definition of bottom fish is pretty broad and for this article we will be targeting the better eating fish such as red Irish lord, brown Irish lord, Pacific sanddabs, petrale sole, rock sole, starry flounder, and greenling. There is a combine limit of 15 fish but make sure you refresh your fish ID skills. On first glance many of the fish are easily confused with each other and are similar to fish with seasonal restrictions. Generally, this article is to help you target nearshore dinner opportunities from a smaller boat. Many of the winter fisheries are either

in shallow water close to the beach or adjacent to boiler rocks and kelp. When fishing these areas, I leave my main running but if you choose not to, you need to know the motor will start without hesitation. If you need to pull your vehicle battery and haul it down the dock to jump the boat. Put the old girl back on the trailer, head to your local market and buy a fillet or two then spend the rest of day sorting out your starting problem.

Almost any rocky area with kelp or sandy bottom will be holding fish. The beach, boiler rocks and kelp all offer excellent light tackle opportunities. We have a number of 10 pound class saltwater spinning rods set-up specifically for this fishery. I spool the reels with 40 pound braid and then

add a short 10-12 pound mono or fluorocarbon top shot. With this setup there is minimal stretch and you can feel the lightest bite. Sometimes the bite will be just a slight hesitation or bump. With the top shot you can break off a snagged lure and quickly retie as needed.

At the business end life is simple, we fish either a high/low rig, a 1/4-1/2-ounce jig head or a highbred of the two. The highbred is tied with two jig heads a lower one as the "anchor" and an upper jig head. This setup can be deadly. We use various curly tail, swim-baits or other small plastics. Bait is not necessary but the various scented Gulp products definitely have an edge. I do use garlic tuna goo on most of the plastics, the added attractant seems

The advertisement features two men in fishing gear holding large fish. The man on the left is wearing a grey cap and sunglasses, holding a large silver fish. The man on the right is wearing a grey hoodie and a cap, holding a large rainbow trout. In the background, there is a stylized red fish logo and a mountain range. The text is overlaid on the image.

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to put more fish in the box. Everybody fishes differently but this is not a cast or drop and jig back to the boat, herky-jerky fishery. You want to cast or drop and let your gear fall to the bottom. If you're fishing the beach, gently lift the rod tip maybe a foot or so then quickly drop it to maintain contact with the bottom. When fishing the kelp or structure you need to consider your drift and that you are fishing with light gear. It is easier to just drop to the bottom, then gently lift the rod tip maybe a foot or so and quickly drop it to maintain contact with the bottom. I tend to use the light wire jig heads so if and/or when you do snag the kelp or a rock just hold on until the hook straightens out. You will have a good chance of

recovering your gear. Keep a pair of needle nose pliers handy to reshape the bend and you'll be back in business in no time.

Philip Chuprinov at Holiday Sports in Burlington has this fishery dialed in. He typically fishes starry or rock flounder the last 2 hours of the ebb tide. Targeting the beach in 10-30 feet of water. He looks for a sandy bottom then uses the highbred high/low rig mentioned above. Small chartreuse or silver scented swim baits doctored up with sand shrimp oil are money. Philip says that although you can legally ice every fish hooked, be discerning and you'll end up with a limit of trophy size fish.

For north end anglers we have a gift of sorts, both

Holiday Sports and Ace hardware in Anacortes have the gear and local knowledge for the Marine Area 7 winter fishery. At Holiday just about anybody can get you pointed in the right direction. Ace has a smallish but well stocked fishing department. The department manager is seriously passionate about the sport, an excellent fisherperson and very helpful.

In closing a couple of thoughts:

First, I love this fishery. In part because it is kind of a finesse fishery, with the subtle bite you really have to pay attention to your presentation. When you feel the bite, don't just haul back and swing. Instead allow your rod to load up and then set the hook. Once you get the hang of it, it is a major hoot and a very satisfying fishery.

To preserve the quality of these fish, use a bleed bucket and then ice down the bled fish. Don't just yard them in and flop your slimy catch on the deck. It won't do anything to enhance the culinary benefits of fresh fish and your deck will be slippery and hard to clean.

Finally, again make sure your boat and motor are seaworthy. Always err on the cautious side, if the weather is questionable there is always another day. Carry an anchor that is deployable from the bow. Never secure your anchor to a side or a stern cleat. This can be a fun family fishery but be safe about it.

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and the love of a great drink.



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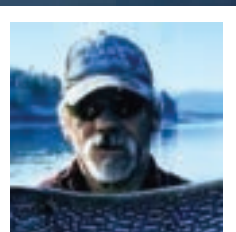




Watch Now!

*Long Lake Bass  
and Alta Lake  
Kokanee Fishing*

# ROBO WORM COMES TO LIFE THE INU RIG



Rick "Fish-N-Fool" Lawrence

There is an interesting and exciting new rig from Japan called the Inu Rig that I have nick-named "Robo Worm" because it is like it comes to life. I only heard about it 6 months ago and so far I have been really impressed. So I thought I would share with you what I have learned about it and the way I have modified the rig to work better for me.

## **Soft Plastic Worm Choices for the Inu Rig**

In my testing, I used the 6" fat Robo worm, the 6.5" Zoom trick worm, and Strike King 7" Perfect Plastics Finesse Worm. There are a variety of worms that will work, but if I had to pick the ideal soft plastic, it would be the 6 to 7 in worm but also slightly fatter in diameter.

Inserting the straw through the plastic is not difficult, but would be easier in plastic worms that offered a little more width – especially at the tail end of the worm.

## **To set up your own Inu Rig the way I fish it, you will need the following items:**

1. Finesse or Trick Worm
2. Small Coffee Stir Stick (Hollow)
3. Number 1 or 1/0 Finesse Wide Gap Hooks
4. Super Glue
5. Scissors
6. 1/2" Clear Heat Shrink Tubing
7. #2 Split Ring (optional)

## Setting Up the Inu Rig (Step-by-Step Process)

**Step 1:** Take the soft plastic worm and the coffee stir stick. Insert the stick at an angle down through the worm above 1" from the head as shown. Then skewer the worm at about the middle of the worm also at an angle from the other direction. Finally, skewer the worm one last time near the tail as in picture 1. This can be straight through as it doesn't need any angle on the tail. Slide the head of the worm up the straw till there is about a ¼" sticking out. Be sure to insert the straw at an angle and not perpendicular to the worm. This will help the line slide through the straw with less resistance and make for a livelier action.

**Step 2:** Put the super glue on that part of the stir stick that sticking out and slide the worm over the glue and let it dry. Cut the straw off flush with the worm. Then push the middle of the worm up the straw until there is about a ¼" left and repeat these steps for all three locations where the straw is placed through the worm. The steps are shown in the pictures is the worm fully skewered. Be sure to experiment with the final straw placement. You can move it closer to the head or tail to change the action. You can also use nail weights in the head or tail to make it an odd form of a Neko rig only with a lot more action.

**Step 3:** Use the scissors to re trim the straw as close to

## Step one of setting up the Inu Rig



the worm as possible.

**Step 4:** Slide a short piece of heat shrink tube down over the head of the worm. Place the hook under it with the hook eye up and the hook point away from the worm. Position the tubing and hook so it is just below the top piece of straw in the worm and heat it up till it is tight on the hook and worm like is shown in the photos. Take the time to ensure the hook eye is directly over the tube/straw as in picture 2.

**Step 5:** Run your line down through the hook first and then the worm from head to tail as shown. Then tie on the second hook or as an option a split ring. You can use another piece of heat shrink tube here as well to attach the hook or just put the hook point into the worm as in picture 3. This makes it a bit more snag proof as normally only the tail touches the bottom.

## Fishing the Inu Rig

The Inu Rig can be fished similar to a traditional wacky rig. Letting drop on a slack line then give it a few

twitches and let it fall again. This makes the worm recoil up as in picture 4 and then go back straight giving it a very life like action and is great to trigger strikes from less active bass. The other way I like to fish it besides the drop method is a swimming presentation. You keep twitching the bait all the way back to the boat with only a short pause in-between. When the Inu Rig is brought back with a horizontal presentation it presents a silhouette and action that is something unlike I have seen before. It resembles a snake when at rest and then has a unique kick to it when twitched. There are times when I can picture this rig being very effective. I would try it during the same time of year and conditions when a floating worm presentation may be used. I also think that the Inu rig could be dynamite on cruising bass that ignore most offerings. During my testing, the action I liked the best occurred when the Inu Rig was twitched on a slack line. This imparted enough energy to make the rig come to life, but wasn't so much action that it would startle wary bass. I must say so far I have had much better luck with this rig on Smallmouth Bass then on Largies, but I think this is mainly due to the fact I didn't start fishing this rig until late summer to early fall and I spend most of my time Smallie fishing that time of year.

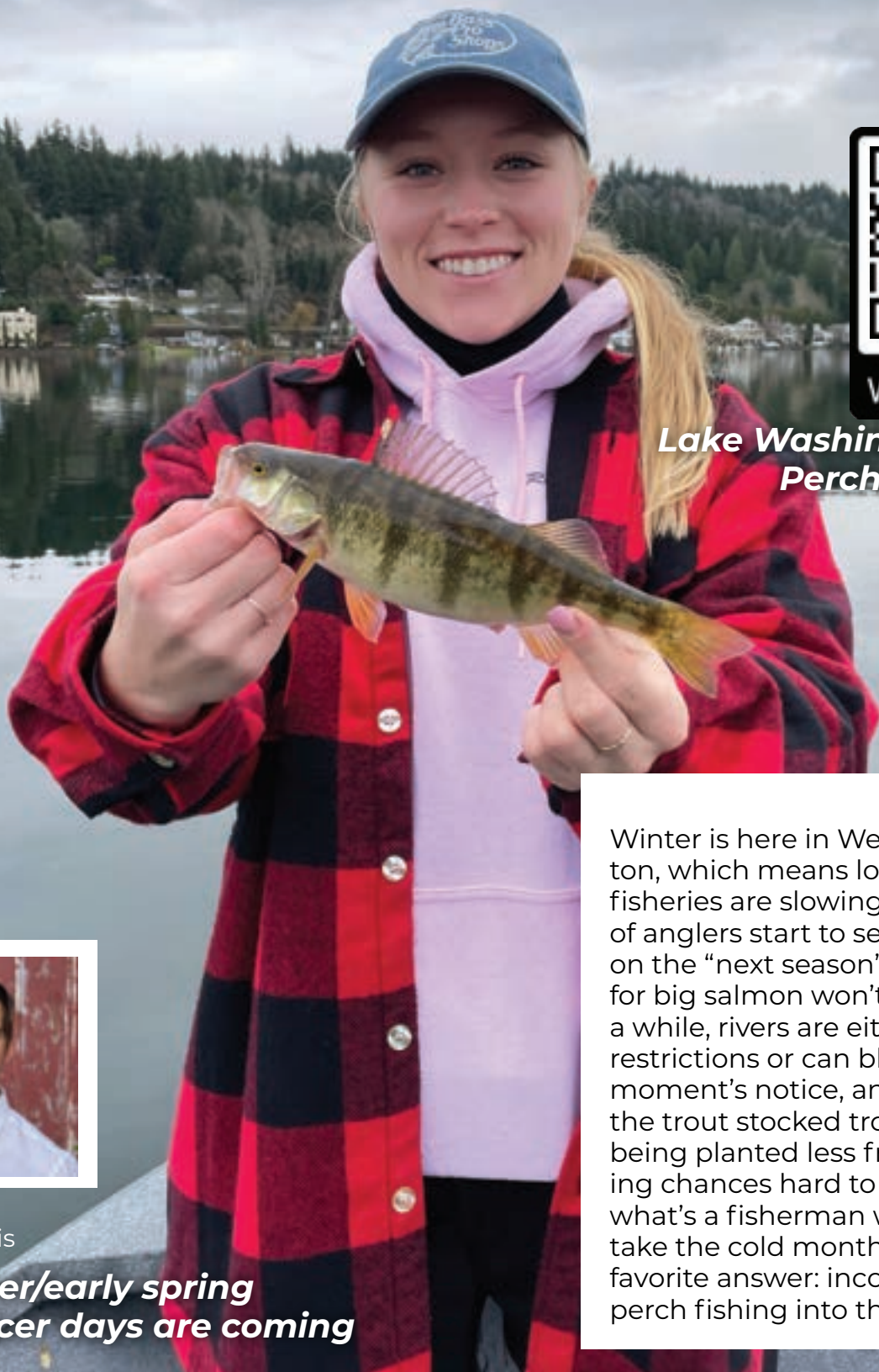


# LATE WINTER YELLOW PERCH



Watch Now!

*Lake Washington Winter  
Perch Fishing Tips*



By Paul Lewis

***Late winter/early spring  
means nicer days are coming***

Winter is here in Western Washington, which means lots of our favorite fisheries are slowing down and lots of anglers start to set their sights on the “next season”. Opportunities for big salmon won’t be around for a while, rivers are either on serious restrictions or can blow out on a moment’s notice, and even many of the trout stocked trout fisheries are being planted less frequently, making chances hard to come by. So what’s a fisherman who refuses to take the cold months off to do? My favorite answer: incorporate winter perch fishing into the rotation of

target species!

Yellow perch are abundant, some of the best freshwater eating in the state, and (for their size) hard fighters on ultralight gear. Almost all local anglers have run into a perch when they were young or as bycatch, but many anglers see them as a nuisance, especially when considering them to be a food source. A big perch is 12 inches, but most are in the 7–10-inch range in our local bodies of water. In the winter, these fish head deep and school up in thousands, just waiting around for your jig to present itself. Now, let's talk perch!

Yellow perch are one of the most common panfish species in our state and inhabit almost all the state's lakes. They have a voracious appetite, live in schools, and will eat just about anything that is of bait size that is near them. In the warm-

er months, perch will be anywhere near shore with some nice structure or foliage. As we can tell by their coloring, they use milfoil and sea plants as camouflage often. In the winters, perch go deep and school up even tighter, creating huge thick walls of fish sometimes packed from the bottom up 20+ feet, and yards wide, almost like a giant carpet moving along the lake bottom. When we think of targeting perch, in the summer



***Better have a sharp knife or an electric one.***

it's just a bit of nightcrawler, or a little spinner, or anything similar, then pitch it out and get bit. In the winter, the best way to get after them is a drop-shot rig with a small 1-3 inch jig. Since the fish are so deep, we need some extra weight to get down to the strike zone. I usually use a 3/8 – 1/2 ounce dropper weight, as I usually am looking between 45-70 feet of water for perch schools. Once your rig is set, it's time to find the perch!

To hunt perch schools, A

good fish finder is a big advantage. I spend a lot of time looking at the screen before I fish, marking spots where I see piles of fish and moving around until I've found a few schools of perch close together, or if I just see a giant one, I will stop. Usually while looking for perch, I put out some trolling gear and try to pick up a trout or two, it's a great way to stay fishing while deep in the sonar screen. After I find a spot to stop, I drop my rod down before I anchor to see if the fish are



***Perch chowder anyone?***

willing to play. If I don't have a bite fairly quickly, I reposition the boat another 25 feet in one direction then drop again. I continue this until I get a hit in short succession after my gear hits the bottom. Once I do, its anchor up and fish on!

If you don't have a fish finder, an easy way to hunt for perch schools is to go into the deeper water of your lake, then drift around until you start getting bit. Where there is one perch, there's



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lots more. Especially if you don't have a fish finder, tipping your jig with some small bait will help. Perch from all around will smell this and if you are close to a school, you'll be able to pull a few fish towards your bait before you drift right over them. It is important to keep in mind that pulling fish out of deep water will cause their swim bladders to extremely over-inflate, meaning the perch will not be able to descend back to their habitat. This is not a catch and release fishery

Ok so you've found the schools, you've filled your bucket with delicious green beauties, and now it's time to prepare for the table. Perch, if just gutted, can be a challenge to eat. They are bony, which means a lot of picking through. This is not

enjoyable, which is what turns a lot of people away from these fish. The best way to go about cleaning a perch is to fillet and skin. Simply cut down to the backbone, fillet off one side, skin, then cut out the ribcage, and have a boneless fillet of sweet white meat! Perch is tasty any way you choose to prepare it. Of course, they make fantastic fish n chips, but I also put them in seafood enchiladas, cold salads, fish chowders, and simply just eaten pan fried with salt, pepper, and some garlic. Truly it is one of the most abundant and versatile fish our area has to offer.

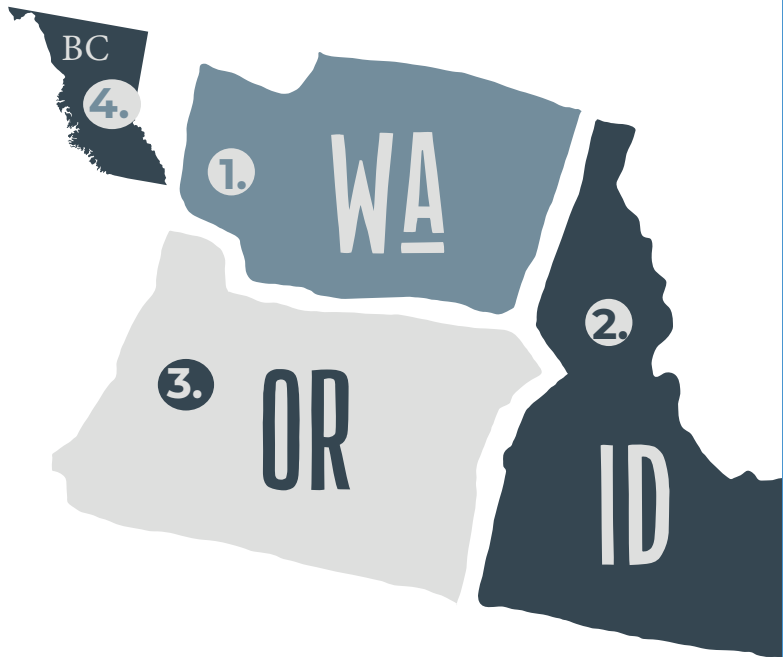
Finally, perch can dominate ecosystems and will feed heavily on small trout and salmon fry in many bodies of water. By targeting

them, we are helping give our beloved trout and salmon a better chance at survival, as well making sure we keep the perch numbers in check, giving room for other great species to thrive.



***Perch make the perfect fish fry!***

# DIRECTORY



## FISH KEY

-  SALMON
-  TROUT
-  WALLEYE
-  KOKANEE
-  STEELHEAD
-  STURGEON
-  BASS
-  CATFISH
-  BURBOT
-  MACKINAW
-  HALIBUT


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- ✓ **Salmon**
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# Life Outdoors

## The Weekender Report

### Plenty of statewide fishing and shellfish gathering opportunities are blooming during March and April

The weather is beginning to warm up and the days are getting longer, creating the ideal time to catch a variety of fish species, including salmon, halibut and trout, and possibly more coastal razor clam digs

#### Razor clams

Spring is a very popular time to dig razor clams especially since the low tides switch from evening to morning hours. All upcoming digs are dependent on marine toxin testing and final approval is usually made one to two weeks prior to each digging series. [Explore all dig dates](#)

#### Columbia River spring Chinook salmon:

Spring Chinook are beginning to enter the Columbia River from the ocean, and state fishery managers expect an improved return forecast of 197,000 adult spring Chinook up from an actual return of 152,675 in 2021. The fishery has been open below the Interstate 5 Bridge since Jan. 1, but it usually doesn't pick up until March and early April. For additional openings in the fishery above the Interstate 5 Bridge, go to the WDFW website.

#### Winter salmon

Sekiu and Pillar Point (Marine Area 5) located in western Strait of Juan de Fuca opens for hatchery winter Chinook from March 1 through April 30. Central Puget Sound (Marine Area 10) has re-opened for winter Chinook through March 31 with fishing allowed Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays only but could close sooner if the catch guideline is achieved. Southern Puget Sound (Marine Area 13) is open year-round for salmon. For details, go to the WDFW webpage.

#### Bottomfish

Lingcod and other bottomfish fishing opens daily from March 12 through Oct. 15 off the Columbia River/Ilwaco areas, Westport, La Push and Neah Bay (Marine Areas 1, 2, 3 and 4 west of the Bonilla-Tatoosh border). Marine Area 4 from the Sekiu River mouth west to the Bonilla-Tatoosh border opens daily for lingcod from March 12 through Oct. 15, and is open year-round for certain rockfish species. Puget Sound/eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca (Marine Areas 6 to 10) opens April 7 for halibut. View the WDFW webpage for specific regulations and what fish species need to be released. [Visit the bottomfish regulations page.](#)

Click for  
more

WDFW Weekender Report

[Click through for region specific opportunities](#)





## Join the WDFW team:

If you'd enjoy preserving, protecting, and perpetuating the state's fish, wildlife, and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities, then check out current job openings or sign up for job alerts. From budget manager to community outreach and education specialist, environmental planners to electricians, fiscal technicians to wildlife biologists, a career with WDFW makes a difference.

[Click for more](#)

## WATCH NOW



Oregon Spotted Frog populations have been found on private property in Washington. We are grateful to landowners who are currently helping these frogs. Understanding where these frogs are will enable us to focus our recovery efforts. Watch the video to learn more.



Landowners and Conservation: Oregon Spotted Frogs

## APRIL NOTICES

### STATEWIDE OPENING DAY FOR TROUT IN LOWLAND LAKES

Mark your calendar for April 23-24 when millions of trout will be stocked into hundreds of lowland lakes. The statewide trout stocking plan for 2022 should be released sometime in March on the [WDFW webpage](#).

### STATEWIDE TROUT DERBY 2022

The WDFW Trout Derby coincides with opening day on April 23 and continues through Oct. 31. Anglers have a chance to catch thousands of tagged trout planted into selected lakes for prizes. Visit the WDFW's [Trout Derby webpage](#) for details.

## Important Dates

- March 4 — WDFW salmon forecast meeting
- March 9 — Discover Pass Free Day: Billy Frank Junior's Birthday
- March 17-19 — Fish and Wildlife Commission
- March 17-20 — Big Horn Outdoor Adventure Show at Spokane County Fair & Expo Center
- March 19 — Discover Pass Free Day: State Parks' 108th Birthday
- March 25 — Wild Washington Live! Habitat at Home, 1-2 p.m. (Visit WDFW website calendar page for Zoom link)
- April 1-7 — Statewide youth-only turkey hunting season
- April 7-8 — Fish and Wildlife Commission
- April 15-May 31 — Statewide spring turkey hunting season
- April 22 — Discover Pass Free Day: Earth Day



# CELEBRATE A LIFE LIVED OUTDOORS

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